

What is claimed is:

1. A printing system comprising:

at least one customer service system for receiving, via a network, order information representing the content of an order
5 of a customer for a print;

a plurality of laboratory servers for outputting the print based on the order information transferred via the network from the customer service system that has received the order information; and

10 an order assigning system existing between the at-least-one customer service system and the laboratory servers, for receiving the order information from the customer service system, for selecting one of the laboratory servers to output the print based on predetermined information, and for transferring the order information to the selected laboratory
15 server.

2. A printing system as defined in Claim 1, the customer service system transferring the order information and flow information representing a flow of the print to the order assigning system, and the order assigning system using the flow information as the predetermined information.

20 25 3. A printing system as defined in Claim 1, wherein the order assigning system detects a load status of each of the laboratory servers at the time of receiving the order information and uses a result of the detection as the predetermined information.

4. A printing system as defined in Claim 1, wherein the predetermined information is an address of the customer included in the order information.

5 5. A printing system as defined in Claim 1, wherein the predetermined information is information specifying one of the laboratory servers described in the order information by the customer.

10 6. A printing system as defined in Claim 1, wherein the predetermined information is the content of the order included in the order information.

15 7. A printing system as defined in any one of Claims 1 to 6, the order assigning system transferring information related to the selected laboratory to the customer service system that received the order information, the customer service system generating selection information for determining a desired one of the laboratory servers based on the information and transferring the selection information to the order assigning system, and the order assigning system using the selection information as the predetermined information.

20 8. A printing system comprising:

a plurality of laboratory servers for outputting a print based on order information representing the content of an order for the print and transferred via a network; and

25 at least one order receiving assigning system for receiving the order information from a customer via the network, for selecting, based on predetermined information, one of the

laboratory servers to output the print, and for transferring the order information to the selected laboratory server.

9. A printing system as defined in Claim 8, wherein the order receiving assigning system or systems use flow information 5 representing a flow of the print as the predetermined information.

10. A printing system as defined in Claim 8, wherein the order receiving assigning system or systems detect a load status of each of the laboratory servers at the time of receiving the order information and use a result of detection as the predetermined information.

11. A printing system as defined in Claim 8, wherein the predetermined information is an address of the customer included in the order information.

15. A printing system as defined in Claim 8, wherein the predetermined information is information identifying one of the laboratory servers specified by the customer in the order information.

20. A printing system as defined in Claim 8, wherein the predetermined information is the content of the order included in the order information.

25. A printing system as defined in any one of Claims 8 to 13, wherein the order receiving assigning system or systems generate selection information by determining a desired one of the laboratory servers based on information related to the selected laboratory server, and use the selection information

as the predetermined information.

15. A printing method for outputting a print by using a plurality of laboratory servers based on order information representing the content of an order for the print and transferred via a network, the printing method comprising the steps of:

receiving the order information transferred from a customer service system receiving the order information described by a customer via the network;

10 selecting one of the laboratory servers to output the print, based on predetermined information; and

transferring the order information to the selected laboratory server.

15. A printing apparatus for outputting a print by using a plurality of laboratory servers based on order information representing the content of an order for the print and transferred via a network, the printing apparatus comprising:

reception means for receiving the order information transferred from a customer service system receiving the order information described by a customer via the network;

selection means for selecting one of the laboratory servers to output the print, based on predetermined information; and

transfer means for transferring the order information to the selected laboratory server.

25 17. A printing method for outputting a print by using a plurality of laboratory servers based on order information

representing the content of an order for the print and transferred via a network, the printing method comprising the steps of:

5 receiving the order information described by a customer via the network;

selecting one of the laboratory servers to output the print, based on predetermined information; and

transferring the order information to the selected laboratory server.

10 18. A printing apparatus for outputting a print by using a plurality of laboratory servers based on order information representing the content of an order for the print and transferred via a network, the printing apparatus comprising:

15 reception means for receiving the order information described by a customer via the network;

selection means for selecting one of the laboratory servers to output the print, based on predetermined information; and

transfer means for transferring the order information to the selected laboratory server.

20 19. An order assigning method comprising the steps of:

receiving order information representing the content of an order for a print described by a customer;

selecting one of laboratory servers to output the print, based on predetermined information; and

25 transferring the order information to the selected laboratory server.

20. An order assigning apparatus comprising:
reception means for receiving order information
representing the content of an order for a print described by
a customer;

5 selection means for selecting one of laboratory servers
to output the print, based on predetermined information; and
transfer means for transferring the order information to
the selected laboratory server.

21. A computer-readable recording medium storing a
10 program to cause a computer to execute the procedures of:
receiving order information representing the content of
an order for a print described by a customer;

selecting one of laboratory servers to output the print,
based on predetermined information; and
15 transferring the order information to the selected
laboratory server.